

TRANSPORTATION SECTOR: VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED REDUCTION

◆ CALIFORNIA

Vehicle Trip Reduction Through Videoconferencing

San Francisco city and county criminal justice staff implemented the use of videoconferencing as a way to reduce vehicle travel by city and county workers. In the past, criminal justice staff would have to travel twenty miles from their downtown offices to two San Bruno jails to conduct meetings with inmates. The videoconferencing program instead uses live video to conduct private interviews between public defenders and probation staff in city offices with incarcerated clients in the county jail. The city purchased and installed four videoconferencing sites at the two jail facilities and at the San Francisco offices of the Public Defender and the Chief Probation Officer.



Besides reducing vehicle miles traveled and hence GHG emissions, videoconferencing also reduces the time involved in meetings since no time is spent getting to and from meetings, or passing through security at the prison. Additionally, the live video system improves privacy because space is limited at the prisons and face-to-face interviews were often conducted in the same room simultaneously. The system also allows public defenders to meet with out-of-state witnesses via satellite rather than transporting and housing witnesses in San Francisco, reducing costs significantly. There are also cost savings associated with reduced mileage reimbursement, and less employee time spent en route.

Results:

The videoconferencing technology employed in San Francisco County has helped reduce the number of 40-mile round trips to the county's two prisons. Although actual GHG reductions have not yet been estimated, initial estimates predicted that the program would eliminate 15,000 round trips in the first year of implementation, accounting for a reduction of about 600,000 vehicle miles traveled (965,400 km), and about 75 MTCE of GHG emissions per year. Overall, the program has been very successful, and was the 1996 "Way to Go!" award winner in EPA's Transportation Partners Program.

Vehicle Miles Reduced	Greenhouse Gas Reductions
600,000 mi/yr	75 MTCE*/yr

Principal Actors:

San Francisco County (San Bruno jails, and Offices of the Public Defender and Chief Probation Officer), Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and the San Francisco Transportation Authority.

Additional Information:

Rick Ruvolo, Commute Assistance Coordinator, City and County of San Francisco, 415-554-6184.

This case study is based on information provided by Rick Ruvolo, City and County of San Francisco.

* Original data have been converted from vehicle miles traveled to metric tons of carbon equivalent (MTCE) using emission factors from *Revised 1996 IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories: Reference Manual*. Table I-27, pg. I.70.